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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [KJUS](#) [CO](#) [SNAR](#)
SUBJECT: COLOMBIA AND BRAZIL MOVING AHEAD ON JOINT SECURITY
COOPERATION AS COLOMBIA RAISES ITS REGIONAL PROFILE

REF: A. 09BOGOTA335
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Classified By: Political Counselor John S. Creamer.
Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) The GOC is reaching out to Brazil and Peru to raise its regional profile and improve trade and security relations with its neighbors. Colombian and Brazil recently concluded an agreement to jointly monitor each other's airspace to combat illegal armed groups (the FARC) and narco-trafficking, and to jointly research and finance military aircraft. The GOC hopes that closer ties with Brazil will help it counter Venezuelan and Ecuadoran influence in the region. Colombia is also helping Mexico and others through the provision of intelligence and security training, as well as joint alternative energy initiatives. In contrast, Ecuador has refused to renew diplomatic ties with Colombia, and the slowly improving relationship with Venezuela--including a successful April 14 meeting between Uribe and Chavez in Caracas--remains fraught with mutual suspicion. End Summary.

BRAZIL: SECURITY AND COUNTER-NARCOTICS COOPERATION

[1](#)2. (C) The GOC is reaching out to Brazil and Peru to raise its regional profile and improve relations and security cooperation with its neighbors (reftel A). Sergio Restrepo, director of international affairs at the Defense Ministry, told us Colombia has increased cooperation with Brazil, concluding an informal agreement in March to jointly monitor each other's airspace within 50 kilometers of their nearly 1,000 mile border. Restrepo told us that contrary to press reports, the agreement was not formally signed and does not permit "hot pursuit" overflights. Still, it allows for increased mutual access and use of Brazil's SIVAM system of radar and satellite surveillance to monitor possible terrorist and narcotrafficking activity. In marked contrast to Venezuela and Ecuador, Brazilian Defense Minister Nelson Jobim publicly said after announcing the agreement that "the FARC would be welcomed by bullets" if it tried to operate in Brazil.

[1](#)3. (C) The agreement also sets up a technology exchange mechanism in order to possibly build military aircraft and vessels, coupled with an aerial interception program. Restrepo said that Brazil's Air Force, which since 2004 has

had a policy of shooting down aircraft suspected of drug smuggling, receives little advance warning of traffickers flying in from Colombia. Another part of the agreement entails technology transfer. Colombia is looking to build a military transport plane similar to the US-made C130 Hercules and plans to help finance the plane's development through Brazilian aircraft manufacturer Embraer. In addition, Santos told the media that both countries are considering the joint development of an unmanned aircraft.

¶4. (C) Restrepo and MFA Coordinator for Latin America and America Frank Godoy Casadiego told us the budding bilateral relations have been developing over several years. Uribe and President Lula met in Rio on April 15 at the World Economic Forum, and agreed to study way to enhance border trade. Uribe also offered to support Lula's effort to host the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio. During a three-day visit by Lula to Colombia in July 2008, the presidents signed 10 bilateral accords on trade, investment, and regional security, as well as a trilateral defense agreement with Peruvian President Alan Garcia aimed at bolstering border and river security.

¶5. (C) After the bilateral agreements were signed, Uribe said Colombia would participate in the South American Defense Council (CDS), a 12-state body under the framework of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) that Brazil had lobbied hard for Colombia to join (reftel B). Lula agreed to Colombia's stipulations that decisions within the CDS be by consensus, and that the CDS only recognize legitimate armed forces, not insurgent groups. Restrepo added that countering Venezuela and Ecuador was a key reason Colombia was looking to boost its cooperation with Brazil.

COLOMBIA LOOKS TO ASSIST OTHER PARTNERS

¶6. (C) Beyond Brazil, Colombia is helping Mexico to combat narcotrafficking and other criminal activity through intelligence sharing and specialized training, taking advantage of expertise developed through Plan Colombia. The GOC is also working with Mexico, Chile, and Peru to promote economic integration and strengthen democratic institutions. The GOC is helping Mexico revive the Plan Puebla-Panama, which seeks to bolster Central American development and includes the construction of small-scale biodiesel plants. Uribe recently visited Honduras to inaugurate a plant funded by Colombia. MFA officials Alicia Alfaro and German Castaneda told us that Colombia and Mexico see their cooperation as a way to counter Venezuelan influence (reftel A). National Police Commander Oscar Naranjo and Vice Defense Minister Sergio Jaramillo visited Haiti on March 19th-20th to explore ways the GOC might help Haiti combat drug trafficking, thwart kidnapping, and reduce police corruption.

ECUADOR: FROZEN RELATIONS

¶7. (C) Improving relations with Brazil and Peru contrast sharply with Colombia's shakier relations with Ecuador and Venezuela. Ecuador broke diplomatic relations with Colombia after the March 2008 military strike against FARC Commander Raul Reyes's camp in Ecuador and has rebuffed GOC effort and OAS efforts to promote the renewal of links. Ecuador also recently imposed strict requirements on Colombians wishing to travel to Ecuador, generating friction with Colombian businessmen. The Colombian and Ecuadoran military now exchange only basic security reports, and what had once been a fluid channel of intelligence has disappeared, according to GOC police and military officials.

VENEZUELA: RELATIONS IMPROVING, BUT "FRAGILE"

¶8. (C) Relations with Venezuela have improved since Venezuela recalled its ambassador following the Reyes attack. Presidents Uribe and Chavez met in Caracas April 14 to discuss trade and security issues. Uribe and Chavez also met in January in Cartagena, signing several economic cooperation

agreements. Despite Chavez' April 14 statements urging the FARC to stop criminal acts, the GOC remains wary of Venezuelan ties to the FARC. In March, Chavez warned that he would respond to any Colombian cross-border incursion against the FARC with tanks and Russian-made aircraft. The MFA's Castaneda told us prior to the Caracas meeting that the GOC's primary aim with Chavez was to stabilize commercial relations. He doubted the two countries would be able to resolve more controversial security issues in the near-term. Castaneda added that the improved relations between Uribe and Chavez could quickly fall apart--especially if there are any new public revelations of GOV-FARC ties.

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